

1984

Mimicking Sisyphus: America's Countervailing Nuclear Strategy

Myrl Allinder

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Allinder, Myrl (1984) "Mimicking Sisyphus: America's Countervailing Nuclear Strategy," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 37 : No. 2 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol37/iss2/12>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

source useful to the press and academic communities. The *Military Balance* is well worth the price and time.

JAMES JOHN TRITTEN
Commander, US Navy

Beres, Louis Rene. *Mimicking Sisypheus: America's Countervailing Nuclear Strategy*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1983. \$19.95, paper \$11.95

"What is to be done?" cries the author, regarding US nuclear strategic problems of 1983. His proposed solutions to this awesome question are no less revolutionary than the solutions proposed for awesome social and economic problems observed by an earlier author in an article entitled *CHTO DELAT? (What Is To Be Done?)*, Nikolai Lenin, 1902). It is ironic that the revolutionary socio-economic solutions of 1902, implemented in 1917-18, were based on an ideology that produced economic disaster by 1921, the feeding of 10 million Russians by the American Relief Administration by 1922, the rise of Stalin by 1924, the murder of millions in the purges of the 1930s, and eventually the amassing of the greatest military machine in the world.

Today's Soviet nuclear arsenal, constructed from the socio-economic blood of the USSR and aimed by 1902 ideas, have had at least one Soviet-desired effect on author Beres: to strike fear to the point of irrational surrender.

Author Beres confesses his fears and recommends that the United States, as soon as possible and unilaterally if need be, do the following

to avoid a certain, horrible nuclear death which could be the only outcome if President Reagan's current nuclear policy and strategy are continued:

1. Initiate a Comprehensive Test Ban to prohibit all nuclear explosions in all environments. Beres would depend upon "imitation and reciprocity," "the Soviet Union [paralleling] American nuclear concessions," and the United States taking "unilateral steps that would demonstrate its good faith."

2. Adopt a No-First-Use Pledge, which would give immediate military advantage to that country with the larger conventional forces. With an odd convolution in logic, author Beres, who lauds the Soviet no-first-use pledge of June 1982, then suggests that the United States has an active "... policy of first use [which] offers incentives to the USSR to undertake a preemptive nuclear strike against the U.S." In other words, the Soviets have promised not to use nuclear weapons first, but if they do, the "devil [U.S.] made me do it!"

3. Undertake a Joint Nuclear Freeze, even if the United States must do the "joint" freeze unilaterally.

4. Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones. For example, the USSR would like to establish a Northern European Nuclear-Free Zone agreement with Nato Allies Norway and Denmark, and with neutrals Sweden and Finland. As for those Soviet nuclear weapons on the adjacent Kola Peninsula, Scandinavians should only think of themselves as under the peaceful Soviet nuclear umbrella.

It is appropriate that author Beres selected a mythological character to set the title and tone of his little book. If the United States will have "... faith in the new forms of international interaction" we will, hand in hand with the peace-loving Soviets, "... fulfill the expectations of a new global society, one based on a more advanced stage of evolutionary development. Why not world government? While the questions surrounding world government are enormously complex, there is really no reason to believe that fundamental transformations of the existing pattern of military force and sovereign authority are an appropriate path to avoidance of nuclear war."

In a word, Beres does not "... believe [in] fundamental transformations of existing ... military ... and sovereign authority": he believes in a "world federal government ... [of] disarmed states and a lightly armed world government force."

You need to read this book to understand the mentality of those who would exploit children and children's fears in political demonstrations against current US nuclear defense policy and strategy. And then put it up on your book shelf, right next to *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *Hansel and Gretel*.

MYRL ALLINDER
Colonel, US Marine Corps

Hartigan, Richard Shelly, *The Forgotten Victim: A History of the Civilian*. Chicago, Il.: Precedent, 1982, 177pp. \$17.95

"The first ground handful of nitre,

sulphur and charcoal drove monk Schwarz's pestle through the ceiling; what will the last do?" Carlyle's questions heads the last chapter of this very useful and well-documented little book. Despite its badly misleading title and crude cartoon frontispiece, the excellent monograph is not a history of civilian casualties in war, though it does serve to remind the reader that far more civilians have perished in the wars of history than military personnel. Actually, it is an admirably concise summation of classical just war theory with emphasis on the principle of discrimination, the rule that unarmed civilians should be treated in warfare as innocent and should not be harmed.

Hartigan, a professor of political science in the University of Chicago, focuses his attention on the historical and theological development of the principle of discrimination as laid down by Christian theorists and developed through fifteen centuries of Western civilization. He identifies Augustine as the true founder of just war theory, citing his characterization of just wars as "... those which avenge injuries, when the nation or city against which warlike action is to be directed has neglected either to punish wrongs committed by its own citizens or to restore what has been unjustly taken by it."

Good classical man that he was, Augustine tended to identify the citizen with his state, and paid more attention to the conditions under which a just war might licitly be declared (*jus ad bellum*) rather than to the principle of discrimination—one